



Money released for school renovations

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Kealakehe Intermediate School received a nice chunk of change this week for a project that was completed in 1999.

Gov. Linda Lingle released an additional \$278,750 for the design of a new administration/library building at the school.

The project's initial design was completed in 1999, and \$259,205 was released for design costs, said Russell Pang, the governor's chief of media relations.

The project was suspended because construction funding was not available. Now, construction funds are available and almost half of the recently released funds will be used to update the 6-year-old design to ensure it meets current building codes and requirements.

Projects are initiated based on what money is appropriated and the only funds appropriated in 1999 were the design funds, said Sanford Beppu, capital improvements project planner for the Department of Education.

"You have to use the funds available when they are appropriated or risk losing them," Beppu said. "Since funds weren't available in 1999, we couldn't continue with construction."

A shortage of funds statewide could be the reason it took five years for the Legislature to appropriate money for the project, Beppu said.

Some of the released funding, which comes from the Department of Education's capital improvement funds, will pay for the consulting services during the construction phase, as well as works of art for public display, said Russ Saito, comptroller and director of the Department of Accounting and General Services.

The total project cost is \$6.2 million, which includes the almost \$280,000 released this week. Although the construction funds were approved by the 2004 Legislature, the money has not been released, Beppu said. When the design update is complete, the DOE will request the remaining funds be released, he said.

The existing administration/library building will be converted into classroom space, which gives the school the ability to offer more services geared around the middle school philosophy, said Ralph Soderberg, eighth-grade U.S. history teacher.

The middle school is geared to meet the developmental needs of an adolescent, Soderberg said. "It's always the kids that are the center of the middle school philosophy and practices. The curriculum is geared around the kids."

There are several programs, like one-on-one tutoring and alternative learning, that are orphaned because there is no space on campus. Additional classrooms will help alleviate that problem, Soderberg said.



The state has released \$278,750 for improvements at Kealakehe Intermediate School. WEST HAWAII TODAY